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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
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INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE 0754  
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA IMMEDIATE 0434  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE 1740  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN PRIORITY 0176

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 006274

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [FR](#) [EUN](#) [TU](#) [CY](#) [MARR](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH FM GUL IN FRANCE: GOOD ATMOSPHERICS, NO  
PROGRESS

REF: A. ANKARA 5333

[1](#)B. PARIS 5824

Classified By: PolMC Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: According to the Turkish Embassy, Turkish FM Gul's September 13-14 meetings with President Chirac, FM Douste-Blazy and Minister-delegate Colonna produced nothing new in substance from the French side. The Turks nonetheless profess to have discerned some softening in French attitudes, which they attribute to a growing, or at least more nuanced, appreciation of Turkey's strategic value vis-a-vis the Middle East (Iran in particular) as well convincing presentations by Gul on what Turkey can and can not do on Cyprus and the Ankara Protocol. According to the Turks, the French indicated clearly that they do not want an EU-Turkey train wreck in October, although they repeatedly asked the Turks "to do something" that would provide a suitable fig leaf. The Turkish hope is that the Finnish presidency will come up with a face-saving package. Although the French MFA does not disagree with the above analysis, its DAS-equivalent for EU external affairs was considerably more pessimistic about the prospects for avoiding a crisis, having concluded that the Turks will not make any unilateral gesture and that, in the absence of political reform and some implementation of Turkey's Ankara Protocol obligations, there would need to be "immediate consequences." End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Deputy Polcouns met September 15 with Turkish PolCouns Baskan Oz, and September 18 with MFA DAS-equivalent for EU external relations Caroline Ferrari to discuss Turkish FM Abdullah Gul's September 13-14 visit to Paris. Gul was here officially to participate in the cultural dialogue with the Mediterranean and Gulf states sponsored by President Chirac. (Note: The Armenian patriarch also attended, with whom Oz said the Turks had excellent relations.) Gul also met with Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy, followed by a press conference and a late dinner, and separately in restricted format with Minister-Delegate for European Affairs Catherine Colonna. The Turks had assumed that Colonna wanted the small meeting in order to pass an important message, but in the event that turned out not to be the case. (Note: Oz was relieved to hear that Colonna often prefers small meetings with her interlocutors.) Gul met as well with National Assembly International Affairs Commission Chairman Edouard Balladur (known for his family's Turkish origins) and a number of deputies and senators who deal with Turkey's EU candidacy.

Gul "gets it" on EU membership

[1](#)3. (C) Oz said that Gul delivered the same message in all his meetings on Turkey's EU candidacy, stressing that it was

important not to close the door entirely on eventual membership so has not to discourage ongoing reform in Turkey.

The important thing was for Turkey to remain engaged in a process aimed at achieving European standards legally, politically and economically; only when Turkey reached that point, in ten to fifteen years, would it be appropriate for the EU and Turkey each to decide whether EU membership was in their mutual interest. Since the EU itself had the key to the membership door, there was no need for crises that would only impede Turkey's development. Somewhat to the Turks' surprise, according to Gul, French deputies and officials were interested primarily in Turkey's assessments of the situation in the Middle East, in particular Iran. Oz claimed to discern increasing understanding for Turkey's growing strategic importance, a conclusion supported by an article in the center-right daily Le Figaro which he described as more valuable than any amount of paid advertising.

14. (C) Ferrari complimented Gul on the skill with which he had "integrated" the message intended by the EU in agreeing to open accession talks and taking account of growing unease with EU enlargement, namely that Turkey should look forward to a long process without a foregone conclusion. She added that Gul had managed the visit well by including meetings with Deputies, a think tank, and a television interview. She agreed, as a consequence of Turkey's decision to participate in UNIFIL in Lebanon and in light of growing instability in the Middle East generally, that Turkey's strategic importance was growing. At the same time, she was explicit that this would not be enough to offset a Turkish failure to follow through on its Ankara Protocol obligations.

Nor did she think that eventual Turkish accession would necessarily become any easier, given the National Assembly's pointed questioning of Bulgarian and Romanian accession.

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But no give on Cyprus

15. (C) On Cyprus and ratification of the Ankara Protocol, Oz reiterated the Turkish position that the protocol is being implemented even absent its ratification. He claimed that Gul's presentation convinced interlocutors that Turkey was doing what it could, and that it could not be expected to open its ports to Cypriot vessels in the absence of EU fulfillment of its 2004 assistance pledges. Oz claimed that Gul's interlocutors, who had no specific ideas of their own on how to escape the impasse, were reduced to calling on Turkey to make a gesture, however small, that could serve as a fig leaf for the October report on Ankara Protocol implementation. In that regard, also given Chirac's perceived pro-Turkish tendencies and the approaching end of his presidency, Oz said the Turks were convinced that France wanted to avoid a crisis.

16. (C) Ferrari agreed that France would like to avoid a crisis, but she expressed pessimism that this would be possible. She said that France had earlier thought that Turkey might be prepared to make some sort of unilateral gesture on opening its ports to Cypriot vessels, but that Gul had made clear that this would not be the case. She stated explicitly that Turkey's obligations on the Ankara Protocol were neither commensurate with, nor could they have any formal linkage with, the EU's pledges of aid for Turkish Cypriots. She criticized the Turks for attempting to make a quid-pro-quo linkage. She argued that opening northern ports for trade was a question for the UN, not the EU, since it related to questions of Cypriot sovereignty. She expressed the hope that the Finnish presidency would succeed in coming up with a package on both issues, without direct linkages between them, that might prove satisfactory to the Turks, but she was not optimistic. She was also explicit that Turkish failure to fulfill its Ankara Protocol obligations would lead to "immediate consequences." It would not be possible, she insisted, just to suspend work on three chapters.

## Armenian genocide

¶7. (C) Asked about the Armenian genocide, Oz said Gul repeated the Turkish proposal to set up a commission of historians to examine the issue, whose report could be endorsed by parliament. The Turks he said, understood that the Socialist Party might attempt to resuscitate last year's draft legislation criminalizing denial of the Genocide. (Note: France officially recognized the Armenian Genocide in 2001.) While this was the year of Armenia in France, Oz said that Douste-Blazy had exercised care during his public remarks and told Gul that he had taken certain risks in doing so, and he expressed confidence that Chirac would be equally careful during his end-September visit to Yerevan. Ferrari stated merely that there was a good risk that new draft legislation would be tabled in the Fall.

## Little on PKK

¶8. (C) There was no discussion of the PKK in France, according to Oz, although the issue came up in the context of discussions of Iraq. Ferrari had no knowledge of the issue.

## French base on Cyprus?

¶9. (C) Without prompting, Oz volunteered that Greek Cypriot President Papadopoulos' proposal that France lease a base on the island was in suspension. He recalled that the base in question nearly caused a crisis years earlier when the Cypriots had shown an interest in purchasing Russian anti-aircraft missiles. Subsequently it was offered to the Greeks, who however had not used it, whence the decision to offer it to France. Oz commented that a French decision to lease the base would cause a crisis with Turkey, given that France could use the British base on the island. He said Gul had addressed the issue indirectly by explaining to the French that Turkey was willing to make its facilities available to French troops and/or equipment on their way to Lebanon.

## Comment

¶10. (C) Oz's judgment that Turkey's value may be increasing in European eyes as the result of increased instability in the Middle East is corroborated at least in part by a corresponding German assessment (ref B). Oz had a very high personal opinion of Gul, an opinion which he believed Gul's French interlocutors shared, as he repeated several times that Gul's eloquence and arguments had reduced his critics to

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silence. Ferrari confirmed that Gul had made a good impression.

¶11. (C) We also subscribe to Gul's judgment that France ideally would like to avoid an EU crisis in October as Chirac heads into the last months of his presidency and the French electorate begins to focus on the upcoming presidential elections. It is not an argument that Chirac needs now, nor does he want to allow it to be exploited by leading center-right contender Sarkozy, who has made no bones about his opposition to Turkish membership and who would seize on any Chirac defense of Turkey to demonstrate yet again how he is different from Chirac.

¶12. (C) Our current understanding is that France and Cyprus, largely at the instigation of the latter (we defer to Embassy Nicosia for an analysis of Cypriot motivations), are in the process of negotiating an agreement for permanent access to Cypriot airfields and ports in the wake of the Lebanon crisis. As Oz also conceded, the French appear to view Cyprus as a natural location from which to stage operations, due to its short distance from Lebanon and strategic location in the Mediterranean.

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